

**Communications Studies (COMS) 580 –B01**  
**Advanced BCS/BFS Project**  
**Fall 2012/Winter 2013**  
**Monday 14:30-17:20**  
**SAIT Campus**

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**Course Description**

COMS 580 is a full course. In one semester teams will produce a media-based project, in the other individuals will complete a critical research essay. The first two weeks of the course will be devoted to group formation, discussion of group process, elaboration of media and critical research projects. Both types of project will be presented to the class at the end of each semester. As many students will be undertaking practicum work, individual arrangements and expectations are to be made with the instructor in January. Class meetings will include student led discussions of communication events and theory.

**Additional Information**

Students undertaking practicums should inform the instructor of the dates as soon as possible. Due to the nature of team projects students should anticipate costs of approximately \$50-\$100 for recording media, equipment rentals and services.

**Objectives of the Course**

The course will help the student to: 1. Integrate theoretical research and practical experience in media production. 2. Increase understanding of theoretical constructs, methodological approaches and research skills while reflecting upon their value in application to specific productions. 3. Exchange ideas and experiences that will broaden understanding of the field of media production.

**Internet and electronic communication device information**

All electronic devices (laptops, cell phones, etc.) should be turned off during class unless alternative arrangements have been made with the instructor.

## **Textbooks and Readings:**

No textbook required. Readings may be assigned according to the project.

Recommended reading:

*Action Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Ernest Stringer, 2007.

*Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., John Creswell, 2009

Theories of communication, culture and media are foundational for this course. Students should already be aware of a wide range of theories from previous studies. At a minimum, you should have a good working knowledge of:

Interpersonal and Behavioral theories such as, Classical Rhetoric, Social Identity, Expectancy Value, Symbolic Interactionism, Uncertainty Reduction, Cognitive Dissonance, Theories of Attachment and Transportation, Cognitive Psychology, Social Psychology in Virtual Communities, and Captology.

Mass Media / Media in Culture theories that include, Agenda Setting, Framing, Cultivation Theory, Dependency Theory, Gatekeeping, Hypodermic Needle, Spiral of Silence, Uses and Gratification, Media Ethics, Subliminal Communication, Theories of Propaganda, and Theories of Persuasion.

Language / Linguistic theories including, Language Expectancy Theory, Semiotics and Semantics.

The above list is not exhaustive, and the placement of specific theories in the above categories is typical, not absolute. Students are encouraged to use any other theories relevant to their work.

## **Assignments and Evaluation**

Students will produce a media-based group research project that will demonstrate both scholarly and practical skills. The group project allows students to explore theories and issues and put them into a practical setting. Ultimately, the success of the projects depends on the dialogue created between the group participants and the larger class.

Further, students will write an advanced research paper, showing their ability to define, integrate and expand on culture and/or communications theories. Although there is a significant amount of latitude in the choice of topics, students are expected to engage in an on-going dialogue with the instructor concerning their research and progress. The paper may be written in an “alternate” style, but only after proper justification, appropriate learning outcomes have been identified, and the approval from the instructor. The paper carries high expectations, and should show a considerable level of research.

Finally, each student will prepare an individual in-class theory presentation that will allow them to share with the class a communications, culture, or media theory of their choosing. They will define and contextualize the theory, sharing relevant points with the

class, and ultimately lead the class in a discussion about the theory. Applicable and current examples should be included. Students are also encouraged to explain the theory with support of media and/or related tools.

Other 'benchmarks' will include a rough draft of the paper, and mid-term assessment meeting with the teams. The specific dates will be determined with the groups. Normally this will be around mid-term. **NO EXTENSIONS** will be offered for either the Media Project or the Research Paper! Electronically submitted assignments are not accepted.

The media project and research paper will largely determine the final grade, however, students will be expected to show initiative and develop their own voice and research abilities. Evaluation of working process as well as individual discussions will contribute to the final mark.

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. Note: Please hand in your essays directly to your instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

### **Assignments and Weighting:**

#### Fall

Paper Outline	5%
Class Presentation/Discussion 1	5%
Rough Draft	10%
Research Paper	<u>30%</u>
	50%

#### Winter

Media Project Proposal (group)	5%
Class Presentation/Discussion 2	5%
Mid Term Project Report (group)	5%
Media Project (group)	<u>35%</u>
	50%

### **Due Dates:**

Research Paper, Due December 3.

Media Project, Due April 8, or April 15, as assigned.

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No**

## **Policy for Late Assignments**

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

## **Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act**

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence, **students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number. Also you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.**

For more information see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

## **Writing Skills Statement**

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Research papers must be properly documented.

If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

## **Grading System**

In this class, you will receive grades in the 4-point scale (2.7, 3.0, 3.3) *rather than* percentages. Sometimes you may receive grade points between letter grades. 3.5 is the mathematical mid-point between a B+ (3.3) and an A- (3.7) and 3.15 is the mid-point between a B (3.0) and a B+ (3.3), etc.

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture: (Revised, effective September 2008)

Letter Grade	Grading Scale	Grade Point Value (see <a href="#">U of C Calendar: Academic Standing</a> )
A+	96-100	4
A	90-95.99	4
A -	85-89.99	3.7
B+	80-84.99	3.3
B	75-79.99	3
B-	70-74.99	2.7
C+	65-69.99	2.3
C	60-64.99	2
C-	55-59.99	1.7
D+	53-54.99	1.3
D	50-52.99	1
F	0-49	0

### **Plagiarism**

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such sources.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Taylor Family Digital Library, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

### **Academic Misconduct**

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link;  
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

## **Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre (220-8237) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

## **Students' Union**

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts see <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

## **Student Ombudsman**

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/services/student-services/student-rights.html>

## **Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points**

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

## **"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333**

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

## **Ethics**

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see

The Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site:  
<http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics>

or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site:  
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/cfreb>

## **Schedule of Lectures and Readings**

Determined by group and semester requirements.